

Nursing Voice

LEHIGH VALLEY
HOSPITAL

First Place
Essay Winner

Lucky's Rainbow

How many of you have shared an experience similar to the one I'm about to describe? Think back in time and picture this: Morning dawns and you roll lazily onto your side. The fragmented memories of an uneventful dream drift away, never to be recalled, and then - suddenly - eyelids pop open, and just one thought registers..... OVERSLEPT! Disoriented, haphazard scurrying around the house follows! Then.... NO coffee to brew, NO clothes ironed, and to top it off, when you finally get into your car - the "BIG E," yes, NO gas. Right then and there you wished you had pulled the covers over your head and stayed in bed. I'm sure many of you have had a typical "Murphy's Law" start to your day - "Whatever can go wrong, will go wrong." Apprehension follows you the rest of the day!

Or would this rainy April day be just a typical "bad" day? As a critical care nurse, I had come to learn that there are no typical days, neither "good", nor "bad." But what was it that was still nagging at me in the back of my mind? What was it that didn't fade away like last night's dreams?



Michelle Bernier, RN
Shock Trauma Unit

I seemed to remember, on my frantic ride to work that morning, something on the radio. That's it... a horoscope? PISCES - "Beware of strangers today, and the changes they may bring to your life." It seemed out of character for that to stick in my mind, as I'm not usually into astrology. Something else to add to my already stressful day that had hardly begun. However, this is where your "Murphy's Day" and mine take different paths! This was "one of those days" that turns into one of life's teachers scribing her lesson on the blackboard of my mind.

Upon entering my unit, I made a pact with myself to get through my workday quietly and cautiously. Why complicate my life with changes on this unlucky day? My attention was immediately drawn to Room 11. So many "strangers" crying as they stood next to the bed of a new patient. As I came closer, I couldn't decide if the patient was a man or a woman because the face was masked by countless bandages. With the way my day had started, I didn't even have to look at the roster to know my name was next to Room 11! I realized that my earlier pact would be harder to carry out than I had anticipated.

"Hi, my name is Michelle; I'll be Fausto's nurse today." Through her tears, with a grief stricken voice, Fausto's wife whispered, "Call him Lucky." My mind raced... is this a cruel joke? Is Fausto's wife so upset that she doesn't realize what she's saying? My stunned expression must have prompted her to explain further. "Fausto means lucky in Italian. All of our family and friends call him Lucky."

As the hours passed, I realized just how severe Lucky's injuries were. Despite frequent draining of cerebral spinal fluid and multiple medications, his intracranial pressures continued to rise. I knew I had to prepare his wife and two daughters for the inevitable... I had to help them say goodbye.

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The Paths of Life

Third Place

My specialty sees the beginning of life,
new with a fresh start.
Yours, just as important, sees the end of a journey,
the last beat of the heart.

Mine educates families to be prepared
with a new life ahead.
Yours comforts families,
helping them cope with death, which they so dread.

We see our rewards daily,
as the young take their place in this land.
Yours are the unspoken rewards:
the soft smile, simple nodding or the giving of a
hand.

Our paths may not cross in nursing,
but our message is the same.
We've chosen this profession from
our hearts, and not for fame.

I look to you most fondly
for your courage and good will,
for many in our profession
could not climb upon your hill.

I'll continue with life's beginning,
as you will with life's end.
And if perhaps our paths cross some day,
in me, you'll have a friend.



Connie Giorelli, RN
MBU



Words from *Mary*

This volume of Nursing Voice is the essay contest which features the staff's Reflections on Nursing. As I read the articles, I was struck by the common threads between them. Words like strangers crying, grief stricken family members, eyes full of fear, unending pain, searching for guidance, death, and lives changed forever. All are pretty scary situations for the patient, the family, and the nurse. In contrast, you will see the role of the nurse clearly visible in words like holding hands, reassuring actions, helping them cope, a reputation for excellence, selfless acts, a labor of love, enthusiasm, great people, smart people, dedicated people, and angels in disguise.

As we as staff continue to function in the many challenging patient and family situations, we as individuals and as peers are not free from the same scary sides of health care. The unending pain, the search for guidance, and lives changed forever seem to be happening very often these days to members of our organizational family. The loss of a family member, a staff member's own diagnosis with a chronic debilitating disease, and the effects of ongoing health care changes on our financial status have unnerved many of us as we go about our day-to-day activities caring for the ill and injured in our health system. As I share in your grief, your fears, and your anger, I am overwhelmed by the level of support you provide to each other, both employees and physicians. I am not surprised by your ability to share of yourself and your ability to grieve together as a family, but gratified to know that these acts of kindness, love and support are offered without expecting anything in return.

I had been struggling to find an ending to these "Words from Mary" which conveys the characteristics

each of you possess when meeting the demands of your professional and private lives. Little did I know I would find them when I served as a group leader at my daughter's Confirmation retreat. The children are learning about the sacrament, the Holy Spirit, and the gifts from the Spirit. Regardless of our faith and church affiliation or lack of one, these seven gifts summarize gifts each of you possess. They are:

WISDOM - The ability to see things as they truly are in an open-minded manner.

UNDERSTANDING - A heart that accepts, cares, listens, understands, forgives.

KNOWLEDGE - The ability to comprehend the truths of the universe.

RIGHT JUDGEMENT - The ability to make good and wise decisions.

COURAGE - The strength to do what is right in spite of challenges.

REVERENCE - A deep respect for faith, for others and for creation.

WONDER AND AWE IN GOD'S PRESENCE - A sense of His greatness and majesty coupled with our faith and deep realization of His nearness.

Although each of you are different in your own right and demonstrate these gifts in different ways, I am constantly in awe of the work you do for our patients, their families, our community, and especially for each other. I admire you, respect you, and I THANK YOU. As you read this issue of Nursing Voice, you will hear, sense, and see demonstrated these gifts among your coworkers.

Mary T. Kinneman

Senior Vice-President, Patient Care Services

Why isn't She Well

Honorable Mention

Scott Alcott
Burn Center



Looking back, taking it all in.
Looking forward, what's the "Big Picture"
Assessing, Diagnosing, Planning, Implementing,
Evaluating...all of the basics.
ICPs, CVPs, BMPs, CBCs, What does it all mean?
Searching for the answer, textbooks cannot tell.
Why is she crying
Why isn't she well?

So much responsibility, so little time.
All the energy, where has it gone?
It was so exciting, now it's scary.
My stomach won't stop quivering.
Why isn't she well?

Searching for guidance from the ones with many
seasons behind them.
Its a turned back, on your own, what is experience?
What does it mean?
A teacher, a facilitator, a scientist, a student, an ana-
lyzer.
I thought it was caring, a soft spoken voice.
Instead I hear anger, short tempers prevail.
We are all on our own.
But why - When she isn't well?

How could they miss it, right before their eyes?
A shadow, no...a mirror of days long gone by.
Sometimes time's a friend, at others a foe.
Remember the beginning, it is as important as the
end.
The trail that leads there, is the ones we mend.
We need you, so we can be the future.
She isn't well, I'm still not sure why.
Please show me, before all that's left to say is
Good-bye.

Honorable Mention

An Unforeseen Change



For the past seven years, I have served the HIV infected and affected population of our area as a member of the AIDS Activities Office here at Lehigh Valley Hospital. For many of us who work in this field, there is an interesting story of how we got started. Perhaps we had a family member or friend that is living or has died with AIDS; maybe in our professional careers we cared for someone with HIV/AIDS.

I don't really have such a story. I have been a nurse for nearly thirty years and I have enjoyed a diverse career. I have used my nursing skills throughout those

hurry to get things done was tempered, with their guidance and encouragement, to see small changes as success and to keep moving on.

People from "the community" who have become my colleagues and friends over the years. We all have the same goals- to improve the health status and quality of life of persons living with HIV/AIDS. Through them I have learned to accept the fact that my view of an improved quality of life may not always be the same as that of the people I serve.

People I work with every day who continually teach me new ways to affect the lives of persons with HIV/AIDS. Each brings a special addition to the sum total that is the AIDS Activities Office. Our program maintains a reputation for excellence thanks to a team of caring professionals committed to finding a solution to each problem.

People in my family who have valued the work I do and have supported me through challenging times. My very special husband, Peter, with whom I've shared twenty-six years of marriage and buckets of tears of frustration, joy and loss. Whenever I doubted my ability to go on, he propped me up and sent me back to face the next challenge.

Most importantly, the people I call my patients, my clients, my friends. Many of them have completed their battle and have gone on to what I believe is a better place. Many are still fighting, determined to continue living with HIV/AIDS. I suppose I have had an impact on their lives. I KNOW they've had an impact on mine.

So, I guess I have succeeded in my goal to change someone's life. The funny thing is, my own life isn't the one I set out to change. Thank God, it just happened that way!

Maria Farkas, RN Aids Activity Office

years touching lives in a broad range of health care settings. At one point, my career changed course and I found myself feeling separated from my favorite role, that of patient advocate. That had been a primary reason for choosing nursing as my profession many years ago. It was important to feel that I was having an impact on someone's life.

When I was offered the position of counselor/case manager for the AIDS Activities Office, I gave it strong consideration. Whether you call it fate, or perhaps a Divine shove (I know it wasn't the money!), I decided to take the job. From there, my story is not really about how I got started, but why I've stayed. The answer is not really a single event but a collection of events surrounding people.

People who have been my mentors and supervisors over the years. With their help, I've found ways to navigate a tangled, convoluted system. My need to

Honorable Mention

To be a Nurse

To be a nurse
Does not just mean
Each day we go to work.
We are more than
Just a teacher
Caregiver, or a clerk.

We have to be
A resource to the
People that we love.
We have to look
For guidance from
Our maker from above.

A neighbor comes to
Ask you for a
Kind word of advice.
Should she call
Her doctor, or
Just use a little ice.

Then there is your child
With a fever
And a cold.
Or, a call from a friend
Who is afraid
Of growing old.

We give advice
We hold a hand
We don't just punch a clock.
Nursing makes our
Lives fulfilled, building...
Block by block.

It is not just
A great big job
That adds a little strife.
It's how we live,
And love, and breathe
It is our way of life.



Loretta Becker,
RN, BSN
Mother Baby Unit

Time Goes by

Honorable Mention



Shirley Wagner, RN, C
Outpatient Pediatrics

Time does not stop. Sometimes I wished that we could slow it down or make the day longer. My purpose? To accomplish everything we need to do to finish our job for the day. There are so many patients and so much to do. For 18 years I have been trying to clear my desk prior to leaving for the day! Impossible. That is my frustration with Nursing.

On the other side, Nursing is very exciting. Perhaps challenging is the word that I am looking for. Nursing is not repetitious; each injection and episode of patient teaching requires a different approach. For 18 years I have been coming to work, ready to accept the challenge of the day. It becomes almost magical and

mystical, to see what story I will keep in my memory or share with my family, as they see me with a smile or a tear.

The magic, for the most part, has come from people, whether they are patients or co-workers. Many times memories are created by the patients, but personally I have found that the best stories come from the encounters I had with friends and co-workers over the years.

I have a story that I will never forget. This story sustains my need and excitement to come to work and face the challenges of being a Nurse. It creates a wonderful feeling. It portrays what a Nurse is and should be.

I was the Practice Manager in the Outpatient Pediatric Department. I was busy interviewing for several Medical Assistant positions; there were several vacancies and we were drowning. TIME GOES BY! I just wanted to finish the job, hire staff, and get them on the unit. I wanted to get finished! I was interviewing in

the office with the door closed and along comes the famous knock! Great. Someone else needs help. At that point, I felt like ignoring it but the knock sounded again. In case it was an emergency, I said, "Come in!" It was Nurse Sue with a child about 5 years old.

Sue asked, "Can Mary look out your window? She wants to see the fair." At first I thought Sue wanted to get a glimpse of the applicant, but soon recognized that the child did not look as if she was full of life, not for a 5 year old. I picked her up onto my desk and observed her excitement, which was very weak, as she checked out the scenery of the fair. Seconds passed. Before Sue left with the child, she said, "By the way, next week when Mary comes back, we will be giving her a dollar from each of the staff, so Mary can go to the fair." I thought that was nice, still unaware of Sue's intent. TIME GOES BY! Two hours later, Sue informed me that this will be Mary's last fair and that was the reason we would be collecting money for her to go. You see, Mary has AIDS. I realized that time was not her friend either!

I hope that at this point I have sent a chill through you. I get a chill every time I relay this story. This is an example of what Nursing is and what can be. As a team and as friends, we learn how to work together, in both good times and bad times. We learn each other's needs and wants. Caring is the characteristic that many of my fellow Nurses and friends portray!

I talk with many people every day in various professions. As time passes by, I must honestly say that people in Nursing continue to have the best stories to tell. We display enthusiasm, we know our purpose and still accept the challenges we face every year, every shift, every hour that we perform as a Nurse.

I know that each day remains a challenge, each day something magical happens. It happens for a reason. That is Nursing. No matter what specialty we practice or where we practice, the magic continues. Think about it, as TIME GOES BY!

Honorable Mention

Inspiration

If you were to look up the word nursing in the dictionary, you would find it reads something like this, "describes nursing as a profession of a nurse; the duties of a nurse." Many a gray area lies within this definition, leaving me to ponder upon what nursing and the role of a nurse is all about. Far from being an expert in the field of nursing, or any other area for that matter, I decided to form my own opinion from a different perspective - that of the patient.

So in the eyes of the patient, what is a nurse? I'm sure if you asked fifty people this question, you'd get fifty unique responses. Let me share mine. Based on my experiences, I would have to say nurses are angels in disguise. And why do I say this? Because while angels serve as attending spirits and guardians of the heavens, I see nurses carrying out this role right here on solid ground. Not only do they keep a watchful eye, but they care for the weak, the blessed and the grieving, the strong-willed and strong-minded, and everything in-between. Whereas the white robe of the angel symbolizes human form in fine art, the white coat of the nurse exemplifies a high level of fine skills in the field of nursing which is carried forward through their dedication and tireless commitment to their patients. Although not visible, nurses do wear wings and a halo. While angels use their delicate wings to relay messages to a higher power, nurses use very broad shoulders to provide patience, understanding, support, and a tender ear for their patients; and to relay messages as a link between patient and physician. The angels' halo represents respect and sensitivity - characteristics nurses share as they reach out to help those in need.

But don't be fooled by the disguise. It's not the white coat, or the wings, or the halo that makes a nurse a nurse BUT what's behind the scenes, what's inside the person - heart and soul - that truly characterizes the nurse as a nurse.

So while an angel is heaven's inspiration, a nurse is the patient's inspiration.



Marion Varec
Data Coordinator, Department of OB/GYN

A Photograph in Time

Mary O'Donnell-Miller, RN
Lehigh Valley Hospice, Allentown Office

Honorable
Mention



I will always remember,
as I remember Jeff,
the walk, the stance, the aura, that day, that photo-
graph in time.

Why, oh why do I remember so.

The air was cold yet promised spring.

The ground was covered with snow, bordered with
hints of green grass to come. The morning sun shone
brightly, radiant and warm with the gentle promise of
the new day.

Why, oh why, could time not stand still.

He strolled, casually, down the center of the street.
Cowboy hat tilted, waving a hello, as if nothing was
out of place, as if he owned the world, as if he had all
the tomorrows he wanted. Or was he just slowly
inhaling that moment, that moment he was alive.
Savoring each breath in a way I have yet to learn.

Why, oh why, did he have to die.

He took life and death as it came to him, quiet, not
needing to say much . . . He would live . . . fully . . .
until he could live no more.

Why, oh why, could I not do more.

Left with only a photograph in my mind . . . I will
always remember . . . the sun . . . the snow . . . that
morning . . . his last good morning . . . his quiet
determination to live fully each moment he had. . . I
will always remember.

Honorable Mention

Reflection on Nursing... *my Journey*

Evolution, development, growth, transformation, transition, change...these words may best be used to describe my journey through Nursing. As a young person, I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life. When others my age said that they wanted to be teachers, secretaries or nurses, I envied their ability to see that far into their future. My idea was to just be free and have fun.

I took a course as a Medical Assistant after high school but never planned to work in the field. I took a position as a Unit Clerk just to have a job. This was my first exposure to the world of hospitals. For three years I worked in that capacity and discovered myself at the bedside more and more often. Anything that would allow interaction with patients such as volunteering to help make beds, feed, transport, or read mail became fun for me. I found those activities more satisfying than the clerical tasks.

I left that position after three years and moved out west for about four years, working at various jobs just to earn a living. It wasn't until I worked as a Nurse's Aide that I realized how fulfilling this profession could be. That was the deciding time of my life. The journey continued to evolve. I returned to this area a little older, still immature, but with some goals in mind. By now I was in my middle twenties. Medicine had not changed as yet, but I was transforming rapidly.

I returned to school to earn my degree as a Licensed Practical Nurse. I was so full of insecurities that I chose that path instead of returning for a degree as a Registered Nurse. I was sure that this road would serve me well. At least, I was sure that I would always be able to find a job. I became pregnant shortly after school and focused the next 15 years on working and raising my son. During that time, I continued to sharpen my skills as a nurse. In addition, I discovered that my appetite to learn never diminished. Whenever the opportunity presented itself for learning, I volunteered or participated eagerly. Still, the fear of structured learning in a classroom held me back. Fear of failure was the real explanation for most of my procrastination.

I am eternally grateful to three nurses who encouraged me to return to school. Each one convinced me that not only was I intelligent enough to complete a course, but that I had something to offer the profession. Now I pass this motivation along to other people whose lack of self-esteem keeps them from leaving their comfort zone.

So the journey continued... I returned to school after almost twenty years. This leg of the journey began gingerly. I put my toes into the water of learning with self-doubt and a great deal of fear. I began with the hardest subject, reasoning that, if I failed, I would not have to continue. Well, failure came but so



Naomi Solomon, RN
Float Pool

did enlightenment. I realized that, although I failed the course, I understood the subject. Encouraged by this insight, I tried again. Course by course I continued. Graduation day arrived eight years after taking that first course.

I jokingly tell people that I set a record in my life. I am the person who took the longest to get a two-year degree. While that may be true, there are certain other realities that accompany my journey. These Reflections are what I share with you now.

First, while others may harm one's self-esteem, a person's self-image can improve. Giving in to fear and doubt will not do this. Success will do this and builds upon itself. Each little success opened my eyes to further possibilities. Even small failures in my path could not limit the my growth.

Secondly, those three nurses were very right. I do have much to offer the profession. The greater truth is that I am more valuable to my patients with an

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Honorable Mention

Martha Matlock



Erin Ford, RN
STU/CNS

The headlines announcing the cold-blooded murder in Allentown are imprinted in my memory even though twelve years have passed. Most people remember some detail - the first-degree murder charge, rare for our area, or the empty stare of the defendant as he was taken into custody, or the gruesome details of the murder itself. I remember Nurse Martha Matlock.

As Nurse Matlock drove home from Lehigh Valley Hospital, a young woman was falling into unconsciousness on the side of the road. People afflicted with the "don't get involved" syndrome would have kept on driving. Martha stopped. She lifted the shirt of the woman and noted multiple stab wounds. She immediately appreciated the extent of danger to the young victim as well as to herself. However, she continued to assess the situation and attempted to revive the victim. While Martha was unable to resuscitate the woman, she had sufficient presence of mind to note details of the car driving off in the opposite direction even as she attended the victim. She suspected she was watching the perpetrator attempt an escape and she was correct.

As the investigation proceeded, Martha's contribution became less evident to the media-watching public, but not to me. My young mind understood that Martha's courageous action to save the stranger went above and beyond her call of duty. As a nurse, she acted selflessly, humbly and professionally. She not only had the technical knowledge to try to resuscitate

the victim; she had the versatility to act appropriately in an unforeseen scenario, a trait which nurses so often need. As a nurse I now recognize another important fact about Martha's actions that night -the victim did not die alone.

Nurse Matlock provided material evidence in this successful prosecution. She also affected my life in what, I am sure, is a permanent fashion. The attributes that she practice constitute the best tradition of the nursing profession. This woman that I had never met would always be an inspiration to me.

Nursing is a selfless act. It is a labor of love. Care and compassion must be built into every daily action of a nurse. They are necessary as a part of the healing process. One is a nurse in and out of the hospital, 24 hours a day, regardless of consequences, as Martha Matlock was.

Much of the routine of nursing can certainly be thankless. As we know nurses will not get accolades for a job well done. The reward is found in the self-satisfaction of helping another human being. Thus, humility is a requisite component of a good nurse. Martha Matlock had it. I strive for it.

Nursing is a profession. No matter what the environment, the job must be done. Perhaps it might be trying to save a life under heroic circumstances, or reassuring a frightened patient, or changing a soiled patient, or collaborating with physicians in myriad circumstances. Professionalism requires performing each of these functions with the same degree of competence and dedication. I strive for this type of professionalism. I strive to emulate Martha Matlock.

Continued from front cover

Lucky's Rainbow

I was so engrossed in carrying out my clinical tasks that the transformation of Lucky's room escaped me until it was nearly complete. Photos lined every inch of the wall and countertop. Lucky on a motorcycle - Lucky next to a car that he had refurbished lovingly - Lucky surrounded by his large family at a reunion in Italy - Lucky embracing his wife and two daughters under a Christmas tree.

As I stared at these pictures through tear filled eyes, I thought - I know the face under those bandages. Lucky and his family are no longer "strangers." They've shared their lives with me through these photos. My thoughts were interrupted as his wife hung up a laminated 4-leaf clover crying, "How can I go on without my Lucky?" She began to question God, then looked to me for answers. I didn't even know where to begin to look for them!

I didn't have to look far! The answer found me at my lunch break. In hopes of clearing my mind, I decided to take advantage of the break in the rain and

go for a short walk. The first sight that captured my eyes was a brilliant rainbow peering from among the dark rain clouds. My once muddled thoughts began to fall into place like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Life is an uncertainty - full of choices on how to live it. One can only hope to do his best to live it to fullest capacity. We all encounter hard times, but just like with the recent storm, one has to look past the dark clouds to find something beautiful to hang on to - like a rainbow. Rainbows are prisms of colors joined to form one image. Our memories, like rainbows, emerge from behind the dark clouds and make the storms more bearable. I went back inside to seek out Lucky's family - my hope was that they could find their own answers in "Lucky's Rainbow."

I can still remember on my ride home thinking... had it only been a mere 14 hours since the start of my "Murphy's Law" day? How could I have learned so much in just one short day - a day I thank God and Lucky for giving me!

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Reflection on Nursing...my Journey

increased knowledge base. Even though I had many years of experience as a Licensed Practical Nurse, the focus and goals of that position compared to my current position are like night is to day. I realize that I have a responsibility to continue educating myself. It is necessary for me to keep abreast of the changes on the horizon.

Next, a life without balance is uninteresting. If I allow only Nursing in my life, then I fail my patients. Walking through life with blinders on will only isolate my thinking. A well-rounded person with interests in

areas other than Medicine will only enhance the experience that I bring my patients and co-workers.

Lastly, this most important Reflection on my journey needs to be shared. Throughout the years, many changes have occurred in my private life as well as in my job. The ability to adapt to those changes while pursuing my goals was an important strength that I never knew I possessed. We all have changes - marriages, births, deaths, divorces, job changes, or illnesses. You too can reach the goal you seek with strength and perseverance.

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Honoring and Rejoicing

break of many of our patients when they have come to us after their diagnosis. They have been loving, kind, compassionate, understanding and tender. They have given hope to those who have felt hopeless, strength to those who are weak, smiles to those who have felt that they could never smile again, and hugs to those who felt no one would ever hug them. They have listened to the suffering and have supported the family members;

they have comforted many who have wept. They are a part of our department that helps to make a difference in the lives of every cancer patient who has entered our doors. As a part of my working family, they have my admiration and my respect. Thank you JoAn Gehris, Mary Lenahan Durnin, and MaryAnn Yonney for the impact you have made on my life. I honor you and also rejoice.

Continuations